

NBC MEET THE PRESS

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KALB: National security, according to President Reagan, last Wednesday night, is the single most important function of the federal government. Our guest today on Meet the Press is the president's assistant for national security affairs, Robert McFarlane. A retired Marine lieutenant colonel, Mr. McFarlane has held various top level jobs, many behind the scene, since 1971. He stepped out front last October when he succeeded William Clark as the President's national security adviser. Our reporters today are Carl Rowan of The Chicago Sun-Times, Bob Woodward of The Washington Post, John Wallach of ~~First~~ HEARST Newspapers, and sitting in for the vacationing Bill Monroe, Andrea Mitchell of NBC News.

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WALLACH: If I can turn to Central America for just a minute, your ambassador in Nicaragua recently cabled the secretary of state to the following effect, that the junta in Nicaragua has abandoned the conciliatory policy it adopted last November in the wake of the Grenada operation. The mining of the ports and the escalation in contra activities has convinced the Nicaraguan leaders that a soft line policy is hopeless as the U.S. government is determined to destroy the revolution. Is that the aim of the Reagan administration, to destroy the Nicaragua revolution, to overthrow the government? MCFARLANE: No, it isn't. The policy of the United States is to try, together with the Contadora countries of Central America, to come to terms with Nicaragua, under...in a relationship in which we, and they, mind our business. The evidence is not very good. The several times we've tried, we've been rebuffed, but we remain willing. And we'd like to come to terms with them. All we ask is that they stop exporting revolution and violence to their neighbors and give the people who are looking for democracy in Nicaragua a chance.

WOODWARD: There have been reports of a fall offensive by the El Salvador rebels, Communist-supported rebels. And, can you kind of weave for us, what is our expectation, our reasonable expectation? Are we gonna hear, see down in Central America, a kind of Tet-like offensive this fall? MCFARLANE: I think so, yes. Evidence that accumulated in the past six weeks suggests that that conscious decision has been made, and we believe honestly, the only way the Salvadoran government is going to be able to deal with that is to prepare the army in terms of training, equipment and so forth, to be able to pre-empt it.

WOODWARD: Could you be specific about what sort of evidence has accumulated over the last six weeks? To give you...I mean, that's a rather alarming thing you're saying. That we're going to have a rat...not only a foreign policy dilemma down there, but that this is going to be taking place in the political campaign here in the United States. MCFARLANE: Well, the sources, I'm not prepared to discuss in public, but the evidence has been shared with the Congress and suffice to say that our community of intelligence experts finds it very credible that...

WOODWARD: Is the magnitude large? Is it a massive support? And has the decision been made by the Soviets to do this or are these the rebels or the Nicaraguans making these decisions? MCFARLANE: The indications are that the

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